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GOD, HAITI, AND SUFFERING

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

January 12, just before 5 p.m. A massive earthquake, magnitude 7.0, struck Haiti near the country's capital. United Nations officials estimated 50,000 fatalities, but according to Haitian government figures, the death toll is at 200,000, with 80,000 buried in mass graves. Those left homeless now number in the millions (Carroll, 2010; "Haiti Earthquake...", 2010; Kates, 2010; Haven and Melia, 2010). Scenes of human suffering—*injured children, weeping mothers, the bodies amid the rubble*—cannot help but evoke heartfelt sorrow and sympathy. Christians automatically mobilize during such times to provide comfort and assistance to the afflicted (James 2; Proverbs 19:17; 21:13; 28:27). Indeed, those nations (like America and Great Britain) and organizations (like the Red Cross), who historically share the Christian worldview, typically surpass non-Christian countries in benevolent outpouring (*Indian Ocean-Earthquake...*, 2010; "Tsunami Aid...", 2005; "Humanitarian Response...", 2010).

As shocking and heart-rending as this event may seem, many other natural disasters have occurred in human history that compare with the Haiti earthquake in its devastation. In America alone, several earthquakes have exceeded the magnitude of the Haiti earthquake. On December 16, 1811, two earthquakes with approximate magnitudes of 8.0 struck southeast Missouri, followed by two additional earthquakes in the same area over the next two months, measuring 7.8 and 7.4 respectively. New

Madrid, Missouri was destroyed, and the course of the Mississippi River was permanently changed, with land on one side of the river shifting to the opposite side of the riverbed (Fleury, 2008a). On April 18, 1906 an earthquake, with a magnitude estimated between 7.7 to 8.3 on the Richter scale, struck San Francisco, killing some 3,000 people and leaving another 250,000 homeless (Fleury, 2007b). On March 27, 1964, Alaska was struck by an earthquake measuring 9.2—the third largest recorded in the world—devastating Anchorage (Fleury, 2007a). On October 17, 1989 an earthquake with a surface magnitude of 7.1 struck 10 miles northeast of Santa Cruz, California, some 60 miles southeast of San Francisco and Oakland. Sixty-seven died, with 3,757 more injured and 12,000 made homeless (Fleury, 2008b).

Throughout China's history, extensive flooding has occurred countless times as a result of the mighty 3,000-mile-long Hwang Ho River. Several of the most terrible floods, with their ensuing famines, have been responsible for the deaths of more than a million people at a time. The southern levee of the river failed in Hunan Province in 1887, affecting a 50,000 square mile area ("Hwang Ho," 2004). More than 2 million people died from drowning, starvation, or the epidemics that followed ("Huang He...", 2004). In contrast, though considered the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history, the death toll for hurricane Katrina in 2005 was about 1,600, with 1.7 million people

displaced across the country (Janega, 2009; "Hurricanes," n.d.). According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the earthquake that created the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 is estimated to have released the energy of 23,000 Hiroshima-type atomic bombs, resulting in more than 150,000 people dead or missing, and millions more homeless in 11 countries ("The Deadliest..." 2005; "Earthquake and Tsunami...", 2008).

In reality, such events have occurred repetitiously throughout the history of the world, and continue to do so—constantly: hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, tornados, floods, tsunamis,

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droughts, and volcano eruptions. In fact, natural disasters kill **one million people** around the world each decade, and leave millions more homeless, according to the United Nation's International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction ("Disasters....," 1997).

This circumstance inevitably elicits the pressing question: "WHY?" "Why would God allow such loss of life, inflicted on countless numbers of seemingly innocent people?" The number one argument marshaled by atheists to advocate their disbelief in God is the presence of widespread, seemingly purposeless suffering. They insist that if an infinite Being existed, He would exercise His perfect compassion and His omnipotence to prevent human suffering (e.g., Lowder, 2004; cf. Jackson, 2001). Prominent atheist Richard Dawkins sarcastically declares:

We know what caused the catastrophe in Haiti. It was the bumping and grinding of the Caribbean Plate rubbing up against the North American Plate: a force of nature, sin-free and indifferent to sin, unpremeditated, unmotivated, supremely unconcerned with human affairs or human misery. The religious mind, however, hubristically appropriates the blind happenings of physics for petty moralistic purposes (2010).

For rabid atheistic evolutionists like Dawkins, to suggest that God uses natural phenomena for earthly pur-

poses is hypocritical, "evil nonsense." To them, the material realm has no ultimate purpose or meaning—other than what humans subjectively assign to it. Even for many people who do not embrace formal atheism, the fact that God apparently seems willing to allow misery and suffering to run rampant in the world, elicits a gamut of reactions—from perplexity and puzzlement to anger and resentment.

THE BIBLE HAS THE ANSWERS

If the Bible is the inspired Word of God (and it is—see Butt, 2007), then it is the only document on the planet that was superintended by God when it was produced. The Bible, therefore, is the only reliable guide for ascertaining the meaning of life and human existence. Only the Bible can make sense of the circumstances that attend life on Earth. And, indeed, it provides the perfect explanations for the occurrence of earthquakes and other natural phenomena. Its handling of the subject is logical, sufficient, and definitive.

"Vale of Soul-Making"

In order to make sense of various aspects of the created order, like earthquakes, one must ask the logically prior question: What is the **purpose** of the created order? If the atheists and evolutionists are correct, the physical realm, with its human inhabitants, has no

purpose, but rather, is a monumental "cosmic accident" (Gould, 1989, p. 44). As Cornell University professor and atheist, Dr. Will Provine, maintained:

Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear—and these are basically Darwin's views. **There are no gods, no purposes, and no goal-directed forces of any kind.** There is no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I am going to be dead. That's the end of me. There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, **no ultimate meaning in life**, and no free will for humans, either (Provine and Johnson, 1994, 16[1], emp. added).

If, on the other hand, the God of the Bible exists, He is the Creator responsible for the material Universe. Why did He create the Universe, specifically the Earth, and then create humans to inhabit the Earth?

The Bible teaches that God created the world to be the most suitable environment in which humans are enabled to make their own decisions concerning their ultimate destiny (Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). We humans have been provided with the ideal environment in which we may freely accept or reject God's will for our lives—what Keats called, "The vale of Soul-making" (1899, p. 369). More specifically, the one essential purpose which God had for creating the world was

the creation of a being (who would have descendants like himself) who would be capable of entering into fellowship with him, who would be capable of becoming a son of God, who (thus) would have to be capable of deciding freely to believe him, to love him with all of his heart, to submit to him in obedience, and whom God could love and eventually glorify (Warren, 1972, p. 44).

Such an environment would necessarily have to possess certain characteristics conducive to the accomplishment of this central purpose. Those characteristics would include an environment that would supply man's basic **physical** needs (since humans have physical bodies), allow him to be a free moral agent, to be challenged, and to learn the things he most needs to learn (Warren, p. 47). But why would God allow human beings to be subjected to

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unpleasant, tragic events—like earthquakes, floods, tornados, and hurricanes? A prominent biblical answer to that question is: natural disasters and nature's destructive forces are the result of specific conditions that are necessary to God's providing humanity with this ideal environment.

God is not blameworthy for having created such a world, since He had a morally justifiable reason for having done so. Human existence on Earth was not intended to be permanent. Rather, the Creator intended life on Earth to serve as a **temporary** interval of time for the development of one's spirit. Life on Earth is a probationary period in which people are given the opportunity to attend to their spiritual condition as it relates to God's will for living. **Natural disasters provide people with conclusive evidence that life on Earth is brief and uncertain** (see Warren, 1972; Thompson, 1997). In the face of physical calamities, we humans would do well to contemplate our own fragility and finitude, and be driven to look beyond ourselves to a higher Power Who can inform us as to our *raison d'être*—our reason for existing.

Punishment for Sin

But does God ever harness natural phenomena—the forces of nature—as tools of chastisement to punish people for their sins? The Bible answers strongly in the affirmative (see Miller, 2005). Indeed, God did so many times in Bible history. He scourged Egypt with plagues of frogs, lice, flies, animal disease, boils, hail, and locusts (Exodus 8-10). He used seismic activity against Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:31-33; cf. Psalm 106:17). He punished the grumbling Israelites with venomous snakes (Numbers 21:6). He punished Ahab and idolatrous Israel with drought for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17). He sent a hurricane-like wind upon the

sea, causing Jonah and his shipmates to fear the destruction of the ship (Jonah 1:4ff.). Nahum announced God's fury against the Assyrian Empire with the words: "The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him" (1:5-6). Job acknowledged: "He removes the mountains, and they do not know when He overturns them in His anger; He shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble" (9:5-6; cf. Isaiah 2:19-21). The psalmist invites: "Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth" (46:8). On the occasion of the giving of the Decalogue, "[t]he earth shook.... Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel" (Psalm 68:8; cf. Exodus 19:18). Indeed, "[i]n His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land" (Psalm 95:4-5).

The prophet Joel interpreted a devastating locust plague as indicative of divine disfavor, punishment for sin, and motivation to repent: "It shall come as destruction from the Almighty." (1:15). He repeatedly referred to the "day of the LORD" (1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14) as a point in time when God intervenes in the affairs of men in human history, harnessing the forces of nature, or even foreign armies, to take vengeance on those who need chastisement to bring them to their spiritual senses. In the context of Joel, the nation deserved the "day of the LORD" because of the rampant immorality and wickedness. The natural disaster she suffered was designed to elicit repentance, alter her behavior, and redirect her to spiritual reality.

The great prophet Amos also described the "day of the LORD" (5:18,20)

in terms of physical catastrophe, including famine, drought, blight, and locusts (4:6-11; cf. 7:1). He added this chilling warning: "Prepare to meet your God!" (4:12). He declared that the God that formed and controls the constellations in the Universe, and can bring flood upon the land is the same God that "rains ruin upon the strong, so that fury comes upon the fortress" (5:9): "The LORD is His name" (vs. 8). The book of Revelation uses figurative, apocalyptic language to allude to this same feature of God's activity in history—the use of natural phenomena as tools of chastisement (6:5-17; 8:7-12; cf. Summers, 1951, pp. 143-145,155ff.).

A word of caution: The Bible does not claim to provide humans with complete explanations regarding the forces operating within the physical Universe. But it does offer **some** clarification regarding natural calamities, shedding light on some of the reasons for phenomena like famines, earthquakes, and floods. It does not claim to offer **every** reason, and it certainly does not claim to explain **every occurrence** of a natural calamity. While one occurrence may be the direct result of God's punitive punishment on people due to their wickedness, another such catastrophe may have no such **specific** intention. Rather, it could be the result of the entrance of sin into the world, or it may simply be the result of the coincidental, God-ordained physical forces necessary to the operation of the Universe (e.g., Matthew 6:45).

In any case, we are speaking specifically about **natural** phenomena—features of the created order that operate according to set laws throughout history. Such phenomena are to be distinguished from **supernatural** occurrences where God has stepped in and suspended the laws of nature that He, Himself, set into motion (e.g., Genesis 19:24; Exodus 7:20; Leviticus 10:2; 1 Kings 18:38). The only way to know when a **natural** disaster is due specifically to divine



A view of the destruction of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake

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retribution is if an inspired prophet sent by God so interprets the event. No such prophets exist today (Miller, 2003a; Miller, 2003b). Nevertheless, **we cannot assume that since the age of miracles has passed that God no longer intervenes in history via natural occurrences.** God still rules in the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:17), and it is still true that “[t]he effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16; cf. 1 Kings 18:41-45; McGarvey 1894, pp. 320 ff.). He still controls the forces of nature, “for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Indeed, even now, it is Jesus Who is “upholding all things by the word of His power,” and “in Him all things consist” (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17). “[E]ven the winds and the sea obey Him” (Matthew 8:27). “O LORD God of hosts, Who is mighty like You, O LORD?.... You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them” (Psalm 89:8-9). God declared to Isaiah: “Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst” (Isaiah 50:2). God articulated through Jeremiah that a nation’s iniquities cause it to forfeit the benevolent aspects of the natural order (5:22-25).

There is every reason to believe that God still uses natural calamities as formative influences in the world. While punishment is certainly a proper purpose to such discipline, the fact is that God simply wants defiant people to repent. He gets a nation’s attention by such means to cause the people to reflect upon their life and behavior. He benevolently subjects them to hardship and calamity in this life to prepare them for the life to come. The **physical** suffering that anyone endures in this life is not worthy to be compared with the **eternal** punishment awaiting those who leave this life in a state of rebellion against God (cf. Romans 8:18).

Sadly, few throughout history get the message. Most are like those to whom God sent His Old Testament prophets. When the prophet Hosea announced the judgments of God against the people as divine chastisement, he regretfully had to report: “But they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek Him for all this” (Hosea 7:10).

When God sent enemies against Israel, Isaiah bemoaned: “For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, nor do they seek the LORD of hosts” (9:13). Ezekiel described his contemporaries as “a rebellious nation.... For they are impudent and stubborn children” (2:3-4). Jeremiah said, “They are all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers. They are bronze and iron; they are all corrupters” (6:28)—which brings us to America’s own spiritual condition. If America continues down its present pathway of immorality and defiant rejection of biblical principles, can America expect to suffer increasing instances of natural calamities?

THE FOUNDERS AGREED

The Founders of the American Republic agreed with the Bible on this point. They believed that while personal sin is addressed by God in eternity at the Judgment, **national** sins are punished in time, in the course of history. The “Father of our country,” George Washington, articulated this principle in his first inaugural address on Thursday, April 30, 1789:

[T]here is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists in the economy and course of nature an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage; between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less persuaded that **the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained** (emp. added).

Washington believed that God’s treatment of America **depended** on America’s recognition of His moral and spiritual principles in her political activities. Disregarding Christian principles automatically means that a nation will forfeit the physical blessings available through God’s providential dealings.

Considered “The Father of the American Revolution,” Samuel Adams wrote a letter from Philadelphia to a friend, two months before the *Declaration of Independence*, on April 30, 1776, stating: “Revelation assures us that ‘Righteousness exalteth

a Nation’—Communities are dealt with in this World by the wise and just Ruler of the Universe. **He rewards or punishes them according to their general Character**” (2006, p. 212, emp. added). After a passionate admonition to his fellow delegates at the Constitutional Convention to seek the favor and guidance of God in their deliberations, recognizing His providential kindness toward them, Benjamin Franklin insisted:

We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that “except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: **We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and bye word down to future ages.** And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest (see Farrand, 1911, 1:451-452, emp. added).

The “Father of the Bill of Rights,” George Mason, insisted to his fellow constitutional delegates: “Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. **They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country.** As nations can not be rewarded or punished in the next world **they must be in this.** By an inevitable chain of causes & effects **providence punishes national sins, by national calamities**” (see Farrand, 2:370, emp. added). Delegate Luther Martin expressed the same viewpoint:

[I]t ought to be considered that national crimes can only be, and frequently are **punished in this world, by national punishments;** and that the continuance of the slave-trade, and thus giving it a national sanction and encouragement, ought to be considered as **justly exposing us to the displeasure and vengeance of Him, who is equally Lord of all,** and who views with equal eye the poor African slave and his American master (see Farrand, 3:211, emp. added).

Also speaking in the context of slavery, Thomas Jefferson warned: “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that **His justice cannot sleep**



Contents of the Ark of the Covenant

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Following Israel's exodus from Egypt, God instructed them to make a small wooden ark (box) overlaid with gold. The ark was 2.5 cubits long, 1.5 cubits wide, and 1.5 cubits high (or about 3.75 x 2.25 x 2.25 feet) and was called the "Ark of the Testimony" or the "Ark of the Covenant" because it contained the tablets of stone whereon the Ten Commandments were written (Exodus 25:16). According to 1 Kings 8:9, "Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone" (emp. added; cf. 2 Chronicles 5:10). The writer of Hebrews, however, indicated that the ark contained "the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant" (9:4). How can both of these passages be correct?

First, it may be that the Hebrews writer was indicating that the pot of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets were in close proximity to the ark, but not necessarily that all three were "in" the ark. Although most English translations refer to what was "in" (NKJV; Greek *en*) the ark or what the ark "contained" (NIV, RSV), the uses of the Greek preposition *en* "are so many and various, and oft. so easily confused, that a strictly systematic treatment is impossible" (Danker, 2000, p. 326). Greek lexicographers give numerous definitions for this word, including: among, within the range of, near, before, in the presence of, etc. (Danker, pp. 326-330). Perhaps the writer of Hebrews only intended to communicate that Aaron's rod, the container of manna, and the tablets of stone were all in close proximity to the ark in the Most Holy Place (the tablets being in the ark, while the manna and rod were "before" the ark; cf. Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10).

Second, it is also very possible that all three items were literally inside of the ark at one time, but not all of the time. Whenever comparing two or more Bible passages that might initially appear contradictory, one must be sure that the same time frame is under discussion. Such is not the case with Hebrews 9:4 and 1 Kings 8:9. In Hebrews 9, the inspired writer refers to the time of Moses, when "a tabernacle was prepared" (vs. 2; cf.

Exodus 25-40). The statement in 1 Kings 8:9 (as well as 2 Chronicles 5:10) is from the time of Solomon, when he built the Temple, approximately 500 years after the tabernacle was constructed. Is it possible that the Ark of the Covenant once contained the tablets of stone, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, while at another time (i.e., five centuries later) the ark contained only the tablets of stone? Most certainly (cf. 1 Samuel 4-5).

What about the allegation that "Aaron's staff could hardly have fit anyway, since the ark was a box only 2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 cubits" (Wells, 2009)? The fact is, no one knows the length of Aaron's rod. Rods served many purposes (e.g., for support, for administering punishment, as a symbol of authority, etc.; see Allen, 1996, p. 1022) and came in various sizes. In Aaron's case, it appears that his rod was more of a symbol of his God-given authority than just a mere walking stick. What's more, even if Aaron had used his rod for support, he may have only been five feet tall and needed a walking stick that was just 3½ feet long. Considering that an average walking cane today is only about three feet long, it should not be surprising that Aaron's rod could have fit into a box that was nearly four feet long.

Indeed, the wording of 1 Kings 8:9 and Hebrews 9:4 are different. But reasonable explanations exist for the variation. There is no doubt that two different time periods are under discussion. Furthermore, as with many Hebrew and Greek words, it may be that the Greek *en* (in Hebrews 9:4) should be understood in a broader sense. Whatever the precise contents of the Ark of the Covenant at any given time in history, rest assured, 1 Kings 8:9 and Hebrews 9:4 are not contradictory.

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OUR WORLD

Evolutionary scientists claim humans and dinosaurs could not possibly have co-existed. They insist that dinosaurs lived millions of years **before** humans arrived on the scene. Yet the available historical and physical evidence proves that dinosaurs and humans lived together only a few thousand years ago (see Lyons and Butt, 2008). One proof of this fact is the abundance of “dragon legends.” These legends, from all over the world, describe creatures that match many of the dinosaurs and flying reptiles in the fossil record (pp. 13–45).

The evolutionary attempts to explain away the similarities between dinosaurs and the creatures historically labeled as “dragons” fail completely. For example, in the Zhucheng, China area, over 50 metric tons of fossils have been collected, with thousands more fossils still in the ground (Cha, 2010). Dinosaur fossils are so plentiful that paleontologist Xu Xing said they “can even be found in some farmers’ private courtyard areas next to their houses” (2010). Local residents have been “digging up ‘flying dragon’ bones for use in medicinal concoctions for generations” (2010, emp. added). Residents have long associated the dinosaur fossils with the ancient creatures known as “flying dragons.”

It is no mere coincidence that descriptions of dinosaurs and flying reptiles match the ancient descriptions of dragons. As Daniel Cohen stated: "No creature that ever lived looked more like dragons than dinosaurs. Like the dragons, dinosaurs were huge reptiles.... It sounds as though the dragon legend could have begun with dinosaurs" (1975, pp. 104,106). The Bible clearly states that God created all creatures, both flying reptiles and dinosaurs, as well as humans, on days five and six of Creation. The repeated references to dinosaur fossils being connected to dragon legends adds historic evidence to the convincing case that dinosaurs and humans co-existed in the past and were not separated by millions of years.

Kyle Butt

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QUESTION & ANSWER

Q What killed the dinosaurs?

A That question has been asked thousands of times, with just about as many different answers given. Due to the fascinating nature of dinosaurs, the media is replete with stories about dinosaur fossils and extinction theories. One of the latest reports comes from Zhucheng, China. About 415 miles southeast of Beijing, a huge 980-foot ravine filled with over 15,000 dinosaur bones is believed to be the largest single repository of dinosaur fossils in the world (Cha, 2010).

What would have caused so many dinosaurs to be buried rapidly in one place? The chief technician at the site stated: "It's very hard to understand why there are so many dinosaurs dead in one place" (2010). The researchers theorize that "the dinosaurs were killed by the force of an explosion from a volcanic eruption or a meteor impact and then were caught in a flash flood, landslide or even a tsunami that threw them together" (2010, emp. added).

As with almost every large fossil discovery in the world, scientists believe that huge amounts of water caused the fossilization at

Zhucheng (see Butt and Lyons, 2008). What historic event could best account for massive amounts of water across the globe burying hundreds of thousands of dinosaurs, and jumbling them together in huge ravines and crevices? The global Flood of Noah's day fits the evidence perfectly (2008). Not only does the Flood provide the water necessary, but the Bible also states that the fountains of the deep "were broken up" (Genesis 7:11). This "breaking up" was most likely massive crustal movements of the Earth's plates, which would have caused volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and colossal tsunamis. The more scientists uncover dinosaur fossils, the more the global Flood of Noah looks like the perfect way to explain their formation.

Kyle Butt

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forever.... The almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in such a contest" (1832, Query 18, pp. 170-171, emp. added).

The Founders went so far as to claim that the Revolutionary War itself was, to some extent, a punishment from God for the sins of the people. For example, on March 7, 1778, the Continental Congress issued a proclamation to the nation in which they alluded to "the evident tokens of his Displeasure" in permitting "the continuation of a cruel and desolating WAR in our land" (*Journals of the...*, 10:229). Their stated solution was for all Americans "to acknowledge his righteous Government, confess and forsake their evil Ways, and implore his Mercy" (10:229). On March 20, 1779, the Congress issued a similar proclamation, which commenced: "Whereas, **in just Punishment of our manifold Transgressions**, it hath pleased the Supreme Disposer of all Events to visit these United States with a calamitous War" (*Journals of the...*, 13:343, emp. added). Again, the solution was for the citizenry to be "sufficiently awakened to a Sense of their Guilt" and "taught to amend their Lives and turn from their Sins, that so he might turn from his Wrath" (13:343). The Congress felt the same way in March of 1780 when they stated to the nation: "It having pleased the righteous Governor of the World, **for the punishment of our manifold offences**, to permit the sword of war still to harass our country, it becomes us to endeavour, by humbling ourselves before him, and turning from every evil way, to avert his anger and obtain his favour and blessing" (*Journals of*

the..., 16:252-253, emp. added). A year later, the Congress again called upon the nation to "confess and bewail our manifold sins and transgressions, and by sincere repentance and amendment of life, **appease his righteous displeasure**, and through the merits of our blessed Saviour, obtain pardon and forgiveness" (*Journals of the...*, 19:285, emp. added).

Both the Bible and the Founders of the American Republic stated unequivocally that God can and will allow natural calamities to be inflicted against peoples who commit iniquity and allow rampant immorality to prevail in society. Is it even remotely possible that Haiti is experiencing this phenomenon?

SUMMARY

Make no mistake: "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son" (Amos 7:14), and, as stated earlier, have no inspired link to deity by which to declare that Haiti is being punished for sin. No one should "speak falsely for God" (Job 13:7). Indeed, Pat Robertson misspoke when he boldly declared his assessment of the situation (Condon, 2010). Nevertheless, the evidence demonstrates that the country is particularly plagued by religious and moral factors among its population that are counterproductive to a healthy relationship with the God of the Universe. Haiti is notorious for its widespread practice of the false religion of voodoo (Guynup, 2004). Despite a heavy historical influence of Catholicism by way of the French colonials, "voodoo may be considered the country's national religion. The majority of Haitians believe in and practice at least some aspects of voo-

doo" (Haggerty, 1989). What's more, the country suffers from the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS outside of the African continent (Craythorne, 2006, p. 102). A 1989 Library of Congress study found that "[h]omosexual activity has contributed to the spread of AIDS in Haiti. AIDS transmission was also related to female and male prostitution. At least 50 percent of the female prostitutes in the capital city's main prostitution center were believed to be infected with HIV" (Haggerty). In a recent study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, an international team of researchers concluded that the initial introduction of the aids virus into America came via Haiti: "HIV went directly from Africa to Haiti, then spread to the United States and much of the rest of the world beginning around 1969" (Avasthi, 2007; Gilbert, et al., 2007, 104[47]:18566-18570; cf. Owen, 2006). Meanwhile in Haiti, "[t]he average age for young people to begin sexual relations is 12, with many young boys and girls starting to have sex as early as eight years old" (Caistor, 2003).

In an article titled "Haiti's Avoidable Death Toll," George Mason University's Distinguished Professor of Economics, Walter Williams, insists that the high death toll and national inability to address domestic calamity is due to Haiti's "self-inflicted poverty"—the result of Marxist inspired "restrictions on economic liberty" (2010). Several of these restrictions are rooted in moral and spiritual degradation. Bribery and other forms of corruption are a way of life for Haitians. Indeed, Haiti has a worldwide reputation for corruption. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) measures the perceived level of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world. This index is a synthesis survey based on 13 different expert and business surveys. Haiti has been listed in the top 10 most corrupt nations for several years, taking the top spot in 2006, the number four spot in 2007 and 2008, and ranking 168 out of 180 in 2009 just behind Iran and eight other Muslim countries ("Corruption Perceptions...", 2009). Williams observes:

Crime and lawlessness are rampant in Haiti. The U.S. Department of State website, long before the earth-

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

March 5-7

Eric Lyons

March 1-2

March 3

March 19-21

Dave Miller

March 13

March 14

March 19-21

March 26-28

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Benton, KY	(270) 527-1271
Clarksburg, TN	(731) 986-3130
Somerville, AL	(256) 778-8961
Aiken, SC	(803) 649-4495
Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
Lexington, KY	(859) 299-9511
Ripon, CA	(408) 838-6773



quake, warned, “There are no ‘safe’ areas in Haiti.... Kidnapping, death threats, murders, drug-related shoot-outs, armed robberies, home break-ins and car-jacking are common in Haiti.” The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade warns its citizens that, “The level of crime in Haiti is very high and the police have little ability to enforce laws. Local authorities often have limited or no capacity to provide assistance, even if you are a victim of a serious crime.” Crime anywhere is a prohibitive tax on economic development and the poorest people are its primary victims (2010; cf. “Protest Demonstration...,” 2005; “Violent Demonstration...,” 2009; “Travel Advice...,” 2010).

While it is tenuous for ignorant, limited man to attempt an overall assessment of a nation’s spiritual condition, sufficient evidence exists to conclude that the moral and religious conditions of Haiti are significantly impaired and contrary to God’s Word. Since, in the words of the Father of our country, “the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on [such] a nation,” what Haiti needs in addition to material aid—and far more desperately—is **instruction in the moral and spiritual principles of the New Testament.**

CONCLUSION

Though politically incorrect, it is high time for the peoples of the world, from Muslim nations, Hindu nations, communistic/Marxist/socialist nations, to animistic, superstitious nations like Haiti, who openly acknowledge and envy America’s unprecedented wealth and progress (to the point that many are dying to get here), to likewise understand that America owes her incredible standing solely to the God of the Bible. He has blessed America because her founding principles openly acknowledged the one true God and sought to promote His religion and the moral principles of that religion (Miller, 2008; Miller, 2009). With widespread indications of the decline of Christianity mounting in America, Americans would do well to face reality: the corruption, immorality, and barbaric conditions that characterize many nations of the world will inevitably transform our own society into a nightmarish, immoral, social cesspool.

Do we really think that God will make an exception and exempt America from its own collection of natural calamities? Historical evidence exists to indicate that in 1811-1812, the town of New Madrid, Missouri was notoriously wicked:

Though it was prosperous as a business village and trading post, its inhabitants were **noted for their impiety**. All the worst elements of a frontier river town were to be found here in this place.... History says but little about the town prior to the earthquake, and that little is not to its credit. It is spoken of as the favorite resort of boatmen, who spent “their Sabbaths in drinking, gambling, and fighting.” Priest and preacher were unheard, or if they were listened to at all, it was with the utmost indifference (Musick, 1897, p. 143, emp. added).

San Francisco at the turn of the century was also widely recognized as a wicked city. The Barbary Coast was rampant with debauchery and every imaginable sexual sin from prostitution to homosexuality (cf. Boyd, 2003; Asbury, 1933). [NOTE: Another striking example is the report of history that at the time Pompey was obliterated by the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79, its citizens were notorious for their rampant immorality (e.g., Connie Gill, 2005; N.S. Gill, 2005).]

Christians understand that no matter how catastrophic, tragic, or disastrous an event may be in this world, it fits into the overall framework of soul-making—preparation for one’s departure from life into eternity. Likewise, the Christian knows that, although the great pain and suffering caused by natural disasters may be unpleasant, and may test one’s mettle, nevertheless, such suffering is neither dysteleological (purposeless) nor intrinsically evil. Nor is it a reflection on the existence of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God. **The only intrinsic evil is violation of God’s will**, i.e., sin (1 John 3:4). What is required of all accountable persons is obedience to God’s revealed Word—even amid pain, suffering, sickness, disease, death, and, yes, earthquakes.

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Dave Miller



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